

First Congregational Church of Palo Alto
United Church of Christ

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

June 4, 2023

Next scheduled Congregational Meeting: TBA, Fall 2023

Call to Order: Rob Lenicheck

Moderator Rob Lenicheck called the meeting to order around 11:20PM. Members gathered for the meeting in a hybrid format, in-person in the social hall and remotely on Zoom. A quorum was established. The meeting was recorded to assist the Church Clerk, who was not present at the meeting, with writing the minutes. The recording will be removed once the minutes are completed.

Approval of Minutes – Rob Lenicheck

The minutes from April 16, 2023, were presented. There were no comments or questions.

Action: Anne Campbell moved that the minutes be approved. The motion was seconded by Debby Martin. The minutes were unanimously approved as written. Rob expressed his thanks to the Clerk, Clare Warner.

Bylaw Change – Rob Lenicheck

Rob noted that during the ministerial review process over the last two years, it became apparent that there was no assignment of responsibility in the Church bylaws for ministerial salary determination. A decision was made that there should be a bylaw change to include the following: (Under the Personnel Paragraph of the Board of Trustees)

(4) Be responsible for salary determinations for all Ministerial Staff with input from the Ministerial Review Committee: salary adjustments shall be subject to approval by the Church Council.

Action: Elizabeth Wolf moved to accept the change in the bylaws as presented. Fred Chancellor seconded the motion. The attending Congregation voted in unanimous approval.

Stewardship (slide) – Rob Lenicheck

Rob praised the Stewardship Committee for their work. The committee was led by Greg Evans and included Cathy Gauthier, Lynn Mitchell, Blake Putney, Grant Sontag, and Bing Heckman. He also applauded and thanked the testimonial speakers: Chris Ernst, Steve Godfrey, Karen Snow, Grant Sontag, Samantha Prabhu, and Megan Fogarty. Rob presented a slide showing the results of the campaign, to date. The goal was \$893k, which represented a 5.1% increase over the previous year. So far, we have fewer pledgers, but the pledges we have received are larger than before. As of June 2, we are \$72k short of our goal. However, there are 40 pledging units who gave previously, but have not yet pledged this year. Their previous pledges amounted to \$150k for the '22/23 fiscal year. Were we to receive even 50% of what these units gave before, we would achieve the FY2024 goal. Rob emphasized that by September, we have usually filled the gap and have not needed to revise the budget.

2023/2024 Budget Discussion (slide) – Rob Lenicheck

Rob presented a slide that reviewed the **FY23/24 Major Budget Changes and Decisions**. He asked for a motion to pass the **proposed resolution**: The 2023-24 operating budget as presented at the April meeting of the Congregation is hereby approved for use starting on July 1. *Action: Blake Putney so moved. Debby Martin seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously accepted by the attending Congregation.*

FCCPA Courtyard Renovation Project (slides) – Diane Churchill and Cathy Gauthier

Diane and Cathy presented a slide listing the committee members, the reasons for the renovation, the opportunity it presents, how it will be paid for and what the committee has been doing and communicating over the past year. They also showed a slide depicting the preliminary landscape design, created by Kikuchi and Kankel. The design includes a raised stage with steps and a ramp. The current fence will be repurposed as a trellis. The courtyard is intended to be a focal point to be used in many ways and designed to draw people into use of the beautiful courtyard. There will be a contemplative area outside the narthex, as well as a water feature with seats. The courtyard surface will be made of permeable pavers that will allow water to reach the various plantings. The plantings will be varied and plentiful with seasonal color and will incorporate 8 trees into the space. There will be composite wood construction for seating and planters. The goal was to have a space that is both peaceful and interesting. With other slides, Cathy showed how tables with seating could be arranged in the courtyard, as well as how 230 chairs would be arranged for services and concerts. The orientation of the seating is facing the Celtic garden. The committee is also working to provide shade for the center area that will augment shade from the trees. A forum on June 18th will go into more details. The proposal calls for plantings that are drought tolerant as well as California native, a universe that includes many possibilities. The design firm has an arborist on staff to help with decisions. **Discussion:** A member wondered if the new trees would present the same safety issues as the previous ones with respect to uneven surfaces. Cathy replied that a special technique will be used to water deeply to avoid surface roots. She added that the committee is looking for longevity and blight resistance. Another member suggested that there be handrails on both the handicap ramp and stage steps. Someone else queried whether there is a provision for shade on the stage, as well as the center area. Cathy said they are looking into providing shade in both areas. In reply to a question about seating capacity, Dave said that it will far exceed what we have now, which is about 180. More details on the fountain will be supplied at the forum on the 18th. It is still not known how long the renovation will take. One congregant mentioned that the proposed surface could be challenging for wheelchairs. Diane said that a final decision has not been made on the surface. Another member suggested that there is a type of permeable pavers that can be put very close to one another, making a solid, flat surface for wheelchairs. As for lighting, Diane and Cathy said that lighting is also being incorporated and that all the technology will be designed to be more simple, convenient, and versatile. In response to a question over Zoom regarding plantings affecting sight lines, the response was that there will be sight lines through the plantings. Nancy Peterson wondered how much the stage area can accommodate and, also, whether there would be any unobtrusive naming opportunities. In answer, there will be room for bands, choruses, etc. Cathy said the Church has leaned away from naming opportunities, in general, adding that there will be ample opportunity to give during the campaign. In response to a question about the size of the proposed budget, Cathy said that the target is around \$700k. Diane and Cathy put up a slide showing what had been spent, so far, which is approximately \$26k.

Discussion and Approval of Proposed Slate – Rob Lenicheck

Rob reported that Karen Routt has accepted the vice chair position. He explained that the moderator is a 4-year commitment: 1 year as vice chair, two years as moderator, then another year as vice chair. He underscored how hard the nominating committee has worked and presented a slide with the committee names. He thanked them for putting us in a healthy position for FY 23/24.

Proposed resolution: The 2023/24 proposed slate of church officers, boards and committees be approved.

Action: *Ben Roberts moved that the resolution be approved. Lucinda Lenicheck seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.*

Rob commented about volunteering and encouraged Church members to help out in this way as they are able. He said volunteering any time during the year is welcome and appreciated.

Capital Campaign Plans – Dave Howell

The intention is to launch the campaign in mid-September and get approval from the Congregation at that time. At this Congregational meeting, Dave wanted to get a approval from the Congregation for the committee members that have been selected to lead the effort. The campaign will support three things: courtyard

renovation (\$700k), paydown of the outstanding loan for the remodel of the social hall, reducing the principal to where it is manageable for the operating budget (\$700), and replacement of the electrical panel, which the City has told us needs to be replaced (est. \$300k). Replacing the panel before it fails will prevent a complete 6-week power outage. The campaign will be for a total of \$1.7mio. The money raised by the campaign is in addition to the annual funds raised to cover the operating budget. The campaign chairs will be Anne Campbell, Megan Fogarty, and Nathan Arora. They will be putting together a committee that will eventually reach out to each individual member of the Congregation. In support, Diane Churchill reminded those attending the meeting that the organ was built using money from a capital campaign, as were the social hall and the kitchen. Debby Martin added that all these things have been a great service to the greater community.

Action: Dave asked for a vote to approve the formation of a committee to lead the capital campaign. Lucinda Lenicheck so moved. Julie Bartlett seconded the motion. The formation of a committee was unanimously approved.

Rob referred to his message in the Annual Report, where he reflected on what he sees from his position in the choir and on all that has happened over the course of the past year as the pandemic has wound down. He expressed his gratitude to everyone who makes our Church what it is.

Closing prayer: Eileen Altman

Pastor Eileen Altman offered a closing prayer.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12PM.

*Respectfully submitted,
Clare Warner
Church Clerk*

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